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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001093

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2016
TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: SIX ADDITIONAL EXPATRIATE HOSTAGES SEIZED IN
NIGERIA

REF: A. LAGOS 1078

[B](#). LAGOS 1050

[C](#). LAGOS 752

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

Summary

[1](#). (C) Kidnappings of both oil and non-oil workers continued in the Niger Delta. Since 8 August, six more expatriates have been kidnapped in two separate incidents. Three of the four kidnappings during the last week may have been committed by the same perpetrators, a new group calling itself the Movement of the Niger Delta People (MONDP). The other kidnapping appears to be a community incident related to the June Peak Petroleum kidnapping. End summary.

Another Kidnapping in Port Harcourt

[2](#). (C) Dredging International Managing Director (MD) Erik Van Wellen confirmed two employees, one Belgian, the other Moroccan, were taken early this morning in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The men were en route to the office when men in camouflage stopped their vehicle. A small band of attackers forced the Dredging International employees from their car. The kidnappers escaped by boat with the two hostages. Van Wellen noted the same technique was used to kidnap Julius Berger employee Guido Schiffaiph on 3 August (reftel A). Dredging International, like construction firm Julius Berger, is not in the oil industry, although the company does some work for oil sector clients.

Peak Petroleum: Deja Vu All Over Again

[3](#). (C) Tony May, MD of U.S. firm Trico Marine's UK-based subsidiary, confirmed four expatriate employees were

kidnapped 8 August from a Norwegian-flagged vessel, the Northern Comrade. Two boats with an unknown number of attackers carried out the kidnapping at approximately 2330, in an oil field operated by Nigerian firm Peak Petroleum. The attackers initially attempted to board the Bulford Dolphin oil rig, but failed. They then turned against the nearby supply vessel, the Northern Comrade. Peak Petroleum Project Manager Evans told us community members seized the vessel's captain and chief engineer, both Norwegian, and two other crew, both Ukrainian. The hostages were the only expatriates on the vessel. The Bulford Dolphin rig is approximately 40 miles offshore of the mouth of the Dodo River, Bayelsa State. Community members attacked and kidnapped eight expatriates from this rig on 2 June (reftel C). Recent security improvements to the rig thwarted the August 8 trespass.

Captivity Continues for German and Filipino Hostages

¶4. (C) Meanwhile, one German and three Filipino men continue to be held as hostages in the Niger Delta. Two German hostage negotiators have arrived in Nigeria. MD Richmond Leeb of Overseas Technical Services, a subsidiary of U.S. firm Baker Energy, told us State Security Services (SSS) agents had visited a militant camp in Rivers State to negotiate the release of the Filipinos. While there, the SSS agents saw both the Filipino and German hostages, evidence the same perpetrators carried out these kidnappings. Leeb told us the Rivers State head of SSS was taking the lead on negotiations. Dr. Igali, State Secretary General (SSG) of Bayelsa State, said he was assisting Rivers State. Igali said the negotiators were "taking their time" with this

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negotiation, and said the recent Agip standoff was mishandled, in part because the negotiations were rushed (reftel B).

¶5. (C) The German Consul reported a group named the Movement of the Niger Delta People (MONDP) had claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of the German national. We do not know if this group has any ties to the Ijaw militant groups the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), or the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC).

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Peak Petroleum: A Community Conflict Continues

¶6. (C) In the wake of the June kidnappings from the Peak Petroleum oil field, Evans said Peak Petroleum signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with communities the Bayelsa State government had designated. Evans stated four communities not beneficiaries of this agreement mounted this latest attack. According to Evans, the Agge, Ogbentu, Ajanabiri, and Orobiri communities cooperated in the attack, with the hostages being held in Agge.

¶7. (C) Evans indicated the Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State is en route to Agge today to secure the release of the hostages. Bayelsa SSG Dr. Igali is also involved in this hostage negotiation. Igali confirmed the four hostages were taken by communities excluded from the Peak Petroleum agreement, but he believed the hostages were being held in Ajanabiri.

Comment

¶8. (C) Excepting the attack on the Northern Comrade, the other three kidnappings during the past week might have been carried out by the same perpetrators. With MONDP's claim of

responsibility for kidnapping the German worker, we may have a new militant group seeking a name, importance, and money.

19. (C) Currently, FNDIC is honoring a tenuous, implicit agreement not to attack facilities or kidnap workers. The recent kidnapers do appear to be less proficient than FNDIC, which engineered the January and February kidnappings. However, the surge in kidnapping indicates MEND/FNDIC is unable to make other groups abide this agreement. More cynically, these other groups could be working with FNDIC by keeping pressure on the GON, thereby strengthening FNDIC's bargaining position with the GON. In any event, the latest string of kidnappings is centered in Port Harcourt, the turf of Ijaw leaders like Ateke Tom and jailed Dokubo Asari. This is not FNDC's ambit. The kidnappings also suggest the state government's (and some companies') practice of routinely paying ransom is becoming increasingly problematic. While it may resolve one kidnapping, it also encourages more. Given conditions in the Niger Delta, the kidnappings will continue.

BROWNE